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ABSTRACT

This report presents recommendations that address needed changes and improvements in state policies, administrative practices, and school and community service programs, in relation to school-to-adult-life transition of young people with disabilities in Minnesota. Recommendations were derived from two sources: (1) reviews of state plans and reports, and federal and state legislation and policies; and (2) interviews with policymakers, professionals, individuals with disabilities, and family members throughout Minnesota. The report begins with a brief history of Minnesota transition policy. Sixty-five recommendations are then presented, within the categories of state level, community level, and individual and family recommendations. A framework for a general planning and implementation process is then presented, focusing on interagency and agency-specific steps. Appendixes list over 50 source documents and reports, identify commonly used acronyms, and summarize the report's recommendations. (JDD)

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Transition Policy in Minnesota

A Glance Back, A Look Ahead

Institute on Community Integration (UAP)

College of Education
University of Minnesota

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Introduction

The years following high school are a challenging period for young adults with disabilities and their families. In comparison to the general population of young adults, they experience higher rates of unemployment, lower rates of enrollment in postsecondary education and training programs, and less involvement in community civic and social events. While Minnesota is recognized nationally for its many accomplishments in assisting young adults with disabilities in making the transition from high school to adult life, these young adults still must overcome many obstacles to achieve their full potential.

Minnesota's accomplishments in assisting young people with disabilities to make the transition from school to work and community living have been a result of important state policy developments, strong commitments by state and local agencies, and Minnesota's emphasis on interagency collaboration as a primary vehicle for improving transition programs and services statewide. Although increasing numbers of our young people with disabilities and their families are receiving meaningful assistance and support in transition, it is apparent that much work remains to be done. During the 1990s it is critical that individuals with disabilities, family members, professionals, and policymakers work together to further improve state and local policies, administrative practices, interagency efforts and programs that affect young adults with disabilities who are in the process of beginning their adult lives.

Impetus for this Report

In 1991, the Minnesota Department of Education was the recipient of a five-year systems change grant for transition from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). This project involves extensive interagency collaboration between the Departments of Education, Jobs and Training, Human Services, and many other state and local agencies. Over the next several years, the project's goal will be to address statewide improvements in five areas:

1) State level policy development and interagency planning.
2) Consumer and family participation in transition planning.
3) Professional development and training programs on transition.
4) Design of comprehensive school and community service programs.
5) Information sharing on effective transition programs and service strategies among state and local agencies.

To support the development of action plans intended to achieve these broad goals, the Minnesota Transition Systems Improvement Initiative, along with other collaborating agencies, requested that this report be prepared. The Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota was selected to assist project planners in undertaking this challenge.

Scope of this Report

The primary purpose of this report is to present recommendations that address needed changes and improvements in state policies, administrative practices, and school and community service programs. The term "policy" is used broadly in this report to mean any course of action that guides decision making and is directed toward the improvement of transition programs and services.

Transition "policy" not only consists of countless federal and state laws and regulations implemented at multiple levels of government across an array of agencies, but also includes informal rules and procedures established by professionals working in public and private organizations. Early in the development of this report project planners determined that an analysis of transition policies and practices must include an examination of the impact that federal and state legislation, regulations, and rules directly have on young adults with disabilities and their families. A fundamental premise underlying the approach to policy analysis taken in this report is that individuals and groups who are most affected by transition policies are in the best position to identify areas that need to be improved. Therefore, recommendations presented in this report were derived from two sources: (1) Reviews of state plans and reports, and federal and state legislation and policies; and (2) interviews with policymakers, professionals, individuals with disabilities, and family members throughout Minnesota.

The determination of needed changes by those who are most affected by transition policies serves as an important point of departure for analyzing and recommending specific policy actions. The goal of this report is to convey relevant and useful policy recommendations based on the commentaries and reports of a wide range of individuals. The recommendations are intended to engage state and local agencies in an active dialogue that focuses on how changes and improvements in transition policies, programs, and practices can be realized.

This report is not intended to be prescriptive. There was a deliberate attempt to avoid delineating specific state and local agency responsibilities concerning these recommendations. Such decisions are the domain of individual agencies responsible for policy implementation. The 65 recommendations presented in this report are intended to provide a general course of action. Policymakers, agency administrators, individuals with disabilities, and their families must, in concert with one another, determine the specific paths to follow. Cooperation and collaboration must become the primary vehicle through which needed improvements occur. Progress is contingent on the capacities of all concerned parties to develop responsive transition policies.

1 Minnesota Transition Policy A Brief History

Transition policies and programs have been shaped by a number of social, legislative, and legal events during the past four decades (see timeline on pages 4-7). Although isolated transition programs date back to the 1920s, the events that most directly influenced contemporary transition policies and practices did not transpire until the late 1950s. The 60s, 70s, and 80s were decades of tremendous progress for persons with disabilities. The emergence of the parent and consumer advocacy movements, deinstitutionalization, community-based services and supports, and right to education laws are but a few of the milestone events that established a new era of public acceptance of persons with disabilities. The 1990s holds a new promise of achieving increased opportunities for young adults with disabilities as they exit school. The current focus on increased accountability, raised standards, quality outcomes, and broader participation by youth with disabilities and families are important developments.

Early Initiatives

Early federal legislative initiatives significantly influenced the provision of services and supports to young adults with disabilities in Minnesota. The federal government encouraged the development of cooperative agreements between state vocational rehabilitation agencies and local school districts through the Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1965 (P.L. 89-333). These cooperative arrangements were intended to afford students with disabilities the opportunity to participate in a wide range of vocational assessment, job training, and employment programs while in high school. By the latter part of the 1960s, the development of cooperative school vocational rehabilitation programs had taken place in 29 school districts in Minnesota. By the mid-1970s, the federal vocational rehabilitation to state matching fund formula decreased. This substantially reduced financial incentives used by local school districts and Vocational Rehabilitation programs in establishing and maintaining these cooperative programs. Consequently, a statewide decline in the number of cooperative school vocational rehabilitation programs occurred.

Special needs vocational education programs expanded throughout Minnesota during the mid-1970s as a result of federal legislation. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) enacted in 1975 emphasized the importance of vocational education for young adults with disabilities in secondary education programs. The Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) required cooperation between vocational education and special education programs in the planning of vocational education opportunities for young adults with disabilities. The primary vocational education and transition services received by students during this period were through school-based vocational assessment, classroom training, and community-based work experience programs.

1965: The Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendments provide additional financial incentives to encourage cooperative efforts between school programs and vocational rehabilitation services.

1950: National Parent's Movement begins with the first national meeting of the National Association for Retarded Children (now the national ARC) in Minneapolis.

1965 /1968: Passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Acts of 1965 and 1968 results in a significant increase in federal funding for educating young adults with disabilities.

1967: The number of children and young adults living in public institutions for persons with mental retardation reaches a record high.

1957: The Minnesota Legislature requires public schools to provide special education services for children and young adults with certain disabilities.

1950-60s: A Changing Vision

1969: The principle of normalization is introduced in the U.S., fueling the deinstitutionalization movement. It holds that persons with disabilities should have life experiences and conditions as similar as possible to those of people without disabilities.

1964: Passage of the Civil Rights Act lays a foundation for subsequent legislation and litigation giving people with disabilities protection from discrimination.

1957: The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Special Education is established within the Minnesota Department of Education.

1966: The photographic essay, *Christmas in Purgatory*, exposes dehumanizing conditions in a public institution for persons with mental retardation. Demands for institutional reform and deinstitutionalization grow.

1970s: A New Direction

1971: Title XIX of the Social Security Act authorizes Medicaid funding for persons with disabilities living in Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded (ICF-MR).

1971: The video essay, *Willowbrook: The Last Disgrace*, appears on national television, further exposing the undesirable living environments of public institutions for persons with mental retardation.

1972: In Wyatt v. Stickney the court rules that residents of public institutions have the right to treatment and rehabilitation services.

1974: People First, the nation's first self-advocacy organization of people with disabilities, is established in Seattle.

1975: Passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) requires public schools to provide free and appropriate individualized education to all children and young adults with disabilities.

1976: Passage of the Education Act Amendments encourages cooperation between vocational and special education programs. As a result, special needs vocational education services are expanded throughout Minnesota and the nation.

1978: The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services is established to coordinate national policy for persons with disabilities.

1971: PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania mandates that school districts in Pennsylvania provide an education to all children and young adults with mental retardation.

1972: Mills v. Board of Education requires public schools in the District of Columbia to provide free educational services to all children and young adults with disabilities.

1973: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits any organization receiving federal funds from discriminating against people on the basis of their disability. Part E of the legislation guarantees the entrance of qualified students with disabilities into colleges and universities.

1973: Young adults with disabilities are targeted as a primary population to be served by work experience and training programs funded under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).

1975: The Minnesota Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities is established in accordance with the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act mandating that each state establish a protection and advocacy system for persons with developmental disabilities.

1978: In Halderman v. Penhurst, a federal court rules that a public institution is not an acceptable residential setting for persons with mental retardation.

1979: The number of children and young adults living in public institutions is the lowest in over 30 years.

1980s: A National Priority

1982: The first State Interagency Cooperative Agreement is established by Special Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Vocational Education in Minnesota.

1983: Transition first emerges as a priority within the U.S. Department of Education with the passage of the Education for the Handicapped Amendments (P.L. 98-199). The legislation requires local and state education agencies to report the anticipated needs, by handicapping conditions, of young adults leaving school. It also establishes a special grant program to promote development of demonstration models on transition.

1984: The Perkins Act requires vocational education programs throughout the U.S. to be accessible for students with disabilities.

1984: The State Transition Interagency Committee (STIC) is formed in Minnesota with representatives from state agencies, parent organizations, and advocacy groups.

1984: A national supported employment initiative is announced by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

1985: The Minnesota Interagency Office on Transition Services is formed to provide leadership to state and local communities in facilitating the transiuon of students from school to work and community living.

1986: The Education for the Handicapped Amendments of 1986 expand the transition initiatives of the 1983 Amendments, with greater emphasis on transition to residential and community life.

1986: Funding for supported employment becomes available in all 50 states with the passage of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments, Title VI-C. Minnesota also becomes the recipient of a five-year systems change grant to support the development of supported employment programs for individuals with severe disabilities.

1987: The Minnesota Interagency Cooperative Agreement to Plan is signed and put into effect. It is a comprehensive plan for action to improve individual, community, and statewide transition planning.

1987: Minnesota passes the most comprehensive transition legislation in the nation (MS 120.16). It requires creation of Community Transition Interagency Committees throughout the state, and inclusion of goals addressing student needs for transition as part of students individual education plans (IEPs).

1990-93: Current and Future Challenges

1990: Passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act guarantees persons with disabilities equal opportunities in the areas of employment, public accommodations, and transportation.

1990: Passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that transition needs be addressed for all students who are 16 years or older. This law clearly indicates that schools are responsible for initiating transition planning and monitoring the provision of transition services.

1990: Passage of the Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act requires that vocational education programs become more accessible to young adults with disabilities. The provision of support services to assure success in vocational education programming at the secondary level is emphasized.

1991: A statewide systems change grant is awarded to the Minnesota Department of Education's Interagency Office on Transition Services and the Division of Rehabilitation Services by the USDOE, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The five-year grant is to support collaboration on improvement of transition services for young adults with disabilities in the state.

1991: Minnesota State Legislature appropriates $500,000 to the Interagency Office on Transition Services for school to community living grants throughout the state.

1991/92: Systems change grants are awarded to 24 states by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The grants are for improvement in transition services and policies.

1992: Minnesota State Legislature requires Community Transition Interagency Committees to gather information on the post school outcomes of former students who received special education services in high school.

1992: Rehabilitation Act Amendments liberalize eligibility criteria and emphasized interagency collaboration in addressing the transition needs of young adults with disabilities. The importance of consumer and family involvement in the development of rehabilitation, plans, and the need to expand supported employment opportunities are also prominent in this law.

Legislative and social policy initiatives that began during the 1950s through the 1970s continue to influence current approaches in delivering transition services. Without question, the progress and occasional setbacks of these three decades paved the way for the tremendous interest in transition that arose during the 1980s.

The Transition Decade

The 1980s can be considered the "transition decade." During this period, an unprecedented number of national, state, and local policies and programs emerged that were specifically targeted to support young adults with disabilities in their efforts to successfully adjust to the challenges of adult life.

Interagency cooperation became a priority among several state agencies in Minnesota in 1982. Special education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation recognized the need to more effectively coordinate their services. A dialogue among these state agencies was initiated that culminated in Minnesota's first state interagency cooperative agreement. This early agreement reflected each agency's commitment to improve services through systematic efforts to coordinate state agency services. The agreement represented an important initial step in laying the foundation for future cooperation among schools and community service agencies at the locallevel.

In 1983, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), identified transition from school to work as one of the major federal priorities of special education programs across the nation. Significant funding to support research and demonstration projects on transition resulted from the 1983 and 1986 amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act.

Minnesota was one of the first states in the nation to undertake formal policy and legislative developments to support transition programs and interagency planning on a statewide basis. These early efforts focused on developing strategies to assure that the transition needs of young adults with disabilities were addressed during their high school years, improving cooperation among schools and community services agencies, and assisting students and families in planning and arranging for post-school programs and services.

The State Transition Interagency Committee (STIC) was established in 1984 to encourage collaboration among state and local agencies to develop a system of services so that young adults with disabilities have the opportunity to live and work in the community as independently as possible. STIC, which is currently comprised of 15 independent state agencies, consumer organizations, and parents, convenes regularly to plan and share ideas on ways to improve the delivery of transition services for young adults and their families. (See Appendix A for a list of the affiliations of STIC members.)

In keeping with its commitment to provide leadership on transition, STIC began intensive discussions with member agencies in 1985 to develop a comprehensive interagency agreement and state plan for action. Over the course of two years, STIC consulted with parents, consumer advocacy organizations, state agency directors, legislators, and university professionals in the preparation of an interagency agreement. Through numerous revisions and deliberations, the agreement was signed and took effect on October 1, 1987. The agreement emphasized Minnesota's commitment to values that stress independence, integration, and productivity, along with actions that improve transition programs and services through state and community level interagency cooperation.

Recognizing that a central resource was needed to build professional and public awareness and orchestrate improvements in transition services statewide, the Minnesota Legislature established the Interagency Office on Transition Services within the Minnesota Department of Education in 1985. This office is charged with the responsibility of assisting Minnesota education and community service agencies in establishing local interagency agreements, providing training and technical assistance to professionals, and disseminating information on exemplary programs and practices. The Interagency Office on Transition Services works closely with the State Transition Interagency Committee in planning and coordinating statewide program improvement activities.

In 1986, the Minnesota Division of Rehabilitation Services was awarded a five year systems change grant to expand supported employment opportunities for persons with severe disabilities in all Minnesota communities. Through these efforts, supported employment has become a permanent service available to virtually hundreds of Minnesota citizens with disabilities. These services continue to be offered through schools, rehabilitation facilities, mental health agencies, day habilitation programs, and other public and private organizations.

Some of the most comprehensive transition policies in the nation were passed by Minnesota lawmakers in 1987. MS 120.17 required that transition goals be addressed on the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) of students with disabilities by ninth grade or 14 years of age. MS 120.16 established Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) throughout Minnesota to address local transition issues. In 1989, additional statutory language required local CTICs to: "(a) meet at least quarterly to fulfill the duties prescribed in the statute; and (b) report annually when directed to the Department of Education summarizing progress and recommendations" (MN 3525.0600).

The Challenge of the 1990s

Events of the early 1990s suggest that the current decade could be the most progressive yet in expanding opportunities for young adults with disabilities to realize their talents and goals following high school. In 1990, Congress enacted the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, P.L. 101-476). IDEA promotes effective transition programming by: (a) providing a clear definition of "transition services;" (b) listing the set of "coordinated activities" that comprise transition services, and detailing the basis for determining which activities are appropriate for an individual student; (c) specifying the process by which a statement of needed transition services is to be included in the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP); and (d) describing the responsibilities of schools to monitor the provision of services. Federal legislation in the fields of vocational rehabilitation (1992 Rehabilitation Act Amendments) and vocational education (1990 Carl Perkins Applied Technology Education Act) also emphasizes the importance of assisting young people and their families at the critical time of transition through the provision of comprehensive services and interagency cooperation.

The importance of assessing what happens to young adults with disabilities once they leave the public school system has been clearly recognized by Minnesota lawmakers. Effective July 1, 1992, Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) are charged with the responsibility to "prepare a yearly summary assessing the progress of transition services in the community, including follow-up of individuals with disabilities who were provided transition services to determine the outcomes. The summary must be disseminated to all adult service agencies involved in the planning and to the Commissioner of Education by October 1 of each year" (M.S. 120.17 subd. 16). A key challenge for the 1990s is to determine how postschool follow-up information can be best used to guide decision making at all levels to improve transition policies, programs, and practices.

Affording young adults with disabilities the opportunities to achieve successful post-school outcomes in adulthood will continue to be a challenge throughout the 1990s. As we enter into an age of higher expectations and diminishing resources, it is critical that future public policies assure the provision of more effective transition services. Such policies must address the weaknesses and deficiencies of the current system while building upon the accomplishments of recent years. Our success in meeting the challenges of the current decade will determine whether the milestones achieved during the past decades were a prelude to an era of even greater growth and progress.

2 Minnesota Transition Policy The Analysis

There are two basic approaches to analyzing policy: "top-down" or "bottom up." The top-down approach focuses on formal policies that are developed at the highest levels through federal and state legislation, and agency rules and regulations. This type of analysis proceeds in a step-wise fashion: formal policies are closely examined in relation to each bureaucratic level of management. The focus is on the influence of specific individual policies in relation to all other related laws and policies at the critical point of implementation. The top-down approach pinpoints deficiencies in formal policy (e.g., laws) and identifies weak links at the implementation level. While the approach is well suited for situations where policy goals are clearly stated and agency implementation responsibilities are well defined, in many ways current laws and public policies addressing transition lack these qualities.

An alternative to the top-down method is the bottom up approach. A major assumption of this type of analysis is that federal and state policy implementation most often occurs at the community level. Therefore, this approach involves identifying the "network" of individuals responsible for and affected by policy implementation to determine the strengths and limitations of existing policies. This network includes individuals who administer programs, those who provide services and supports, and, most importantly, the recipients of services and supports (e.g., consumers and family members). Examining public policy at the implementation level helps to clarify the actual impact of federal and state laws and policies on youth with disabilities and their families. This allows policymakers and administrators the opportunity to link grass roots implementation concerns with broader federal and state policy development. This information serves as the basis for developing action plans to improve transition policies and practices.

Methods Used for This Report

A combination of the top-down and bottom up approaches was used in formulating the recommendations found in this report. A top-down approach, in and of itself, was not perceived to be particularly useful for the purpose of analyzing transition policies in Minnesota for three main reasons. First, there is very little specific federal or state "transition" legislation to identify and analyze outside of the discipline of special education. Second, the assignments of cross-agency responsibility for transition are still in their formative stages of development and therefore difficult to pinpoint. And lastly, the heterogeneous needs of youth with disabilities make a thorough top-down analysis of all potential formal policy prohibitive. Such an analysis would require a complete review of all legislation and regulations in the education and human service fields. Therefore, the top-down analysis in this report is limited to the review of federal and state public policy that specifically concerns transition.

Using the top-down approach, key state and federal laws, regulations and rules were examined in addition to state agency plans. Key legislation and agency regulations pertaining to the fields of special education, rehabilitation, vocational education, and human services were reviewed and an analysis undertaken to identify the major legal and procedural provisions pertaining to transition. In addition, an extensive review of documents published by federal and state agencies, research centers, and advocacy organizations was conducted. Appendix B provides a listing of these sources.

The bottom up method as applied in this analysis involved extensive interviews with over 100 individuals representing three groups of citizens knowledgeable about transition services: (1) state level policymakers, (2) professionals, and (3) individuals with disabilities, family members, and advocates. Policymakers included individuals responsible for state agency policy development and implementation. Professionals were identified as individuals in public and private organizations who have responsibility for implementing programs and services at the community level (e.g. rehabilitation counselors, school personnel, case managers, postsecondary educators). To solicit the perspectives of individuals most directly affected by transition policies and programs, individuals with disabilities, family members, and advocates were also extensively involved.

Interview questions were developed to gather information in five general areas affecting transition: (1) state policy, (2) community services, (3) state and community level interagency collaboration, (4) agency cost sharing/resource pooling, and (5) nature of individual and family involvement and participation. Although certain questions were tailored to each of the three groups, a core set of questions were given to all groups. These questions were:

1) What current policies and services positively facilitate the transition of youth with disabilities from school to adult life?

2) How could current transition policies and services be improved?

3) What factors most contribute to the success or failure of interagency collaboration?

4) How can agencies and organizations share costs or pool resources to better support youth in transition?

5) What can state agencies and local professionals do to empower consumers and family members to more fully participate in the transition process?

Analysis Results

The top-down analysis revealed consistent findings concerning changes and improvements needed in current transition service delivery practices. These included the needs to: (1) improve interagency cooperation and collaboration in transition planning for individuals and families; (2) broaden the roles of community service professionals in relation to case management functions to ensure that youth with disabilities make needed connections to adult services; (3) gather and use information on what happens to students following school completion in the improvement of local transition programs and services; and (4) emphasize the importance of actively involving students and family members in transition planning.

The thorough review of the interview responses gathered in the bottom-up analysis revealed four major needs that exist in the state: (1) the need to improve collaboration among agencies, (2) the need for training and support for professionals, (3) the need for consumers and families to feel empowered, and (4) the need to improve community access and participation. Table 1 summarizes the major issues associated with each of these four needs and indicates which groups identified these issues as being of particular importance.

Table 1 clearly indicates the considerable agreement across groups on several key issues concerning transition in Minnesota. Policymakers and professionals placed more emphasis on improving interagency collaboration than did consumers. Consumers suggested more opportunities to participate in interagency groups. Professionals and individuals with disabilities and families focused more on securing training and support for professionals and involving community access and participation than did policymakers. All groups identified issues involving support for consumers and their families as being of primary importance.

It is interesting to note that, overall, respondents did not emphasize formal agency policies or laws as major barriers to securing needed improvements in transition services and supports. The issues identified in Table 1 reveal that the challenges in improving transition lie primarily in developing responsive programs and services through maximizing current options within existing policies.

The results of the two analyses form the basis for the recommendations in the remainder of this report. The following sections identify specific recommendations centered on bringing about needed improvements in transition policies and programs at the state, community, and individual and family levels.

Table 1. Needs and issues which emerged from the interviews			
	Policymakers	Field Professionals	Consumers & Family Members
Improving Collaboration			
Maintain a primary focus on consumer needs	✔	✔	✔
Secure a commitment to interagency collaboration	✔	✔	
Develop a shared vision, goals, and priorities for transition	✔		
Develop an outcome orientation	✔	✔	
Emphasize on creative problem solving	✔	✔	
Training and Support to Professionals			
Define professional roles and responsibilities	✔		
Develop ways to utilize assessment information across agencies	✔	✔	✔
Develop joint plans		✔	✔
Streamline information sharing through common release forms		✔	✔
Improve information dissemination	✔		
Improve interagency training and technical assistance		✔	
Reduce caseloads		✔	✔
Develop interagency agreements to resolve funding issues	✔	✔	✔
Empowering Consumers and Families			
Encourage consumer control over supports and services	✔	✔	✔
Assure consumer involvement at all levels of decision making	✔	✔	✔
Assure consumer input into individual transition planning	✔	✔	✔
Provide consumer self-advocacy training	✔	✔	✔
Design transition information specifically for consumers/families	✔	✔	✔
Assure lifelong availability of supports and services	✔	✔	✔
Improving Community Access and Participation			
Increase access to generic community services			✔
Improve employment opportunities	✔	✔	✔
Address transportation issues	✔	✔	
Expand the availability of affordable housing		✔	✔
Expand accessible leisure and recreational opportunities		✔	✔

3 *Minnesota Transition Policy* State Level Recommendations

It is clear from the policy analysis that the policy developed at the state level has a profound effect upon planning and service efforts at the community and individual/family levels. The following state level policy recommendations respond to the need for collaboration among state agencies and compliance with recently enacted federal legislation.

Update the Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement

Efforts to strengthen interagency cooperation in Minnesota are critical to improving transition services and supports to young adults with disabilities. In order to positively affect collaboration at the community and individual levels, state level interagency agreements must be clear and comprehensive. The Minnesota Interagency Cooperative Agreement to Plan developed in 1987 was an important first step in shaping interagency strategies for transition. Since 1987, several changes have been made in federal and state laws, rules, and regulations. Minnesota must revise and update its current State Transition Interagency Agreement to reflect these changes that directly impact the provision of transition services and supports.

1. **Re-examine the roles and responsibilities of state agencies in the delivery of transition services and supports.**

   Agency responsibilities for the development and provision of comprehensive transition services must be re-examined. Strategies should be developed to encourage the active and continuous participation of a broad range of state and local agencies. The roles and responsibilities of these agencies must be clearly defined within the revised Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement. The State Transition Interagency Committee is encouraged to assume leadership for this activity.

2. **Involve young adults with disabilities and their families in the development of the Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement.**

   Young adults with disabilities and their families have valuable perspectives and insights regarding quality and effectiveness of the current service delivery system. It is essential that their viewpoints be incorporated in the revised Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement. This can be accomplished by including young adults with disabilities and families on planning committees and conducting statewide public meetings and forums to obtain input.

3. **Support the actions of Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) in improving transition services.**

Minnesota legislation, enacted in 1987, specifically defines the roles of Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs). According to transition legislation in Minnesota (MS 120.17 Subd. 16), CTICs are to:

1) Identify current services, programs, and funding sources within the community.
2) Facilitate the development of multiagency teams to address the transition needs of individuals.
3) Develop a community plan to address the transition needs of young adults.
4) Recommend changes or improvements in the community system of transition services.
5) Exchange agency information.
6) Prepare a yearly summary assessing the progress of transition services in the community, including follow-up of individuals to determine outcomes.

The Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement must articulate clear guidelines and steps that assist CTICs in fulfilling these responsibilities. This will require state agency support and a commitment of resources to facilitate productive actions at the community level.

4. **Maximize cost sharing and resource pooling opportunities among agencies at the state and community levels.**

When the costs for transition services are shared among agencies, the total cost to any one agency is reduced. A broader sharing of agency resources will help to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to a full array of school and community services. The Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement must identify procedures and mechanisms that agencies can use to pool resources and cost-share transition planning, service development, and delivery statewide.

5. **Require that the Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement be reviewed and updated annually.**

Because interagency collaboration must be an active and ongoing process in order to improve transition services and supports for young adults with disabilities, the Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement should be continuously evolving. The State Transition Interagency Committee should annually lead a full scale review of the Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement. The Agreement should be evaluated in terms of its direct impact and benefits in facilitating state and community level changes and program improvements.

Encourage collaboration and the sharing of information among schools and community service agencies

Collaboration among schools and community service agencies is essential when making available transition services and supports to individuals with disabilities and their families. Collaboration requires representatives of different agencies to assume collective responsibility for the resolution of challenging problems which young adults with disabilities encounter in adult life. The development of functional linkages and cooperative working relationships among agencies must continue to be strengthened. The systematic sharing of information among schools and community service agencies is critically needed to ensure comprehensive planning for young people and their families.

6. **Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of professionals in the transition process are clearly defined.**

   Professionals who work directly with young adults with disabilities must be aware of their own roles and responsibilities, as well as the roles and responsibilities of others. State agencies must take the lead in defining professional roles and ensuring that involvement in specific transition activities becomes a clear priority for professionals throughout the state. Agency job descriptions should contain explicit descriptions concerning the interagency and transition related responsibilities professionals are to assume. Each state agency involved in the provision of transition services and supports should assume responsibility for this activity.

7. **Assist young adults with disabilities and their families in accessing needed school and community services.**

   Young adults with disabilities and their families must often negotiate a bureaucratic maze of regulations and eligibility criteria to access services. In order to make services more accessible, a single point of entry should be established whereby professionals of one agency can generate referrals to other agencies when addressing the needs of individuals and their families. Additionally, ensuring that service applications and eligibility decisions are made in a timely manner is especially important to improving service accessibility.

8. **Encourage the sharing of information on young adults with disabilities among agencies on a need-to-know basis.**

   Improving the exchange of essential information among organizations is critical to making the delivery of transition services and supports more efficient and responsive. The development of a standard release-of-information form that provides consent for information to be shared between agencies is needed. A release-of-information form suitable for use by all agencies would eliminate the need for parents and/or individuals with disabilities to repeatedly sign different agency release forms to provide access to needed information. While the privacy of individuals must be maintained by upholding the highest standards for confidentiality,

exchanging information in a more efficient manner will result in more timely service delivery and reduce unnecessary duplication of efforts. To ensure confidentiality, professionals are urged to consult with the Minnesota Human Rights Commission when acting on this recommendation.

9. Promote joint planning among agencies in the development of individual plans for young adults with disabilities.

State agencies are encouraged to explore strategies and develop procedures for coordinating the joint development of individual plans. Currently, special education develops Individual Education Plans (IEPs), vocational rehabilitation develops Individual Written Rehabilitation Plans (IWRPs), and county social service agencies develop Individual Service Plans (ISPs). Establishing a joint planning process among community service agencies and schools would enhance service planning and coordination, and reduce repetitive and often duplicative meetings individuals with disabilities and family members must attend. Individuals with disabilities and family members should, however, have choices over whether or not to participate in joint planning meetings due to data privacy issues.

10. Encourage the co-location of services for young adults with disabilities and their families at the community level.

Co-locating services to improve their accessibility to individuals with disabilities and their families is critically needed. When professionals from different organizations are located in one place, they have opportunities to regularly interact with one another and become more knowledgeable of each other's roles and responsibilities. State agencies are encouraged to promote the co-location of services in schools, government offices, and community centers that are convenient and accessible to individuals with disabilities and family members. Agencies are also encouraged to schedule office hours at convenient times to ensure accessibility.

11. Identify and extend services to unserved and underserved groups.

The full range of transition programs and services must be extended to young adults who are unserved and underserved, including people with mental health disabilities, sensory impairments, physical disabilities, and traumatic brain injuries. Currently, many of these individuals either receive no service or are maintained on extensive waiting lists for services that may or may not be appropriate when attempting to address their individual needs. Minnesota's state agencies must review their service eligibility criteria, develop new services or modify existing ones, and alter funding streams to assure that these individuals are afforded equal opportunity to the full range of educational and community services.

Ensure that Minnesota's educational and transition policies are consistent with intent and requirements of IDEA

The federal regulations addressing the new transition requirements contained within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 were finalized on November 13, 1992. Even though Minnesota has been proactive in bringing about progressive public policies and state legislation supporting the development of transition services statewide, IDEA carries with it added requirements that Minnesota will need to address.

12. Define "transition services" within Minnesota laws and regulations in accordance with IDEA.

As defined in IDEA, "transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed with an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to postschool activities including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities must be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other postschool adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation." The Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training, and other state agencies should include the federal definition of transition services described in Section 300.18 of IDEA in their State Plans. The definition of transition services should also be included within the Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement.

13. Change policy and procedures to promote the inclusion and involvement of students in transition planning.

IDEA promotes the active participation of students in the development of transition plans. The law states that "if a purpose of the meeting is the consideration of transition services for a student, the public agency shall invite the student and a representative of any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services." This means that students age 14 or grade nine in Minnesota are required to be invited to participate in their IEP meetings when transition goals are to be developed. Policy actions and procedures will need to be developed to ensure that students and their families are adequately informed of their right and responsibility to attend such IEP meetings. IDEA further stipulates that "if the student does not attend, the public agency shall take other steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered; and if an agency invited to send a representative to a meeting does not do so, the public agency shall take other steps to obtain the participation of the other agency in planning of any transition services." Minnesota policies and procedures concerning IEP team membership and responsibilities to place additional emphasis on the importance of including students and other agency representatives in IEP meetings must be amended.

14. Change policy and procedures to promote the inclusion and involvement of family members in transition planning.

IDEA requires that "if a purpose of the IEP meeting is the consideration of transition services for a student, the notice conveyed to parents for such a meeting must also indicate this purpose; indicate that the agency will invite the student; and identify any other agency that will be invited to send a representative." The Minnesota Department of Education should review existing procedures and regulations pertaining to parental notification of IEP meetings and amend them in accordance with IDEA.

15. Encourage collaboration among agencies as they address transition services in IEPs.

The new federal transition statutes require that the IEP address needed transition services as defined in Section 300.18 of IDEA. Emphasized here is the importance of interagency collaboration and the specification of agency responsibilities and/or linkages that need to be developed when addressing transition services within student IEPs. Comprehensive discussions will need to occur among Minnesota state agencies regarding these requirements. The Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement provides an excellent vehicle for articulating IEP planning and service delivery responsibilities among Minnesota's agencies.

16. Encourage state agencies to review and determine agency responsibility for transition services.

IDEA also describes the educational agency's responsibilities in monitoring the provision of postschool services described and identified in the IEP. The law states that "if a participating agency fails to provide agreed-upon transition services contained in the IEP of a student with a disability, the public agency responsible for the student's education shall, as soon as possible, initiate a meeting for the purpose of identifying alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives and, if necessary, revise the student's IEP." The law does not require that the educational agency provide the unmet transition services, but rather that it reconvenes the IEP team to review the matter. More specifically, IDEA stipulates that "any participating agency, including a state vocational rehabilitation agency, is not relieved of the responsibility to provide or pay for any transition services that the agency would otherwise provide to students with disabilities who meet the eligibility criteria of that agency." The Minnesota Department of Education will need to clearly define the scope and duration of specific service provisions in concert with other Minnesota state agencies. This will also require special education to engage in a monitoring and follow-up function to assess the extent to which previously determined services are currently being received or, as yet, unmet. Therefore, Minnesota's state agencies are encouraged to fully review and make essential determinations regarding agency responsibilities for transition services.

17. **Determine the qualifications of personnel to provide rehabilitation counseling services as defined within IDEA.**

IDEA has expanded the definition of related services to include "rehabilitation counseling services." Rehabilitation counseling services are defined as "services provided by qualified personnel in individual or group sessions that focus specifically on career development, employment preparation, achieving independence, and inclusion in the workplace and community of a student with a disability." The term also includes vocational rehabilitation services provided to students with disabilities by vocational rehabilitation programs funded under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The determination of who are "qualified personnel" to provide rehabilitation counseling services is a matter to be determined by each state. The Minnesota Department of Education should, in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training, determine the qualifications of personnel (certification, licenser, or other qualifying criteria) to provide rehabilitation counseling services as defined within IDEA.

18. **Encourage state agencies to reflect the importance of assistive technology in their policies and procedures as well as through identification and involvement of public and private resources.**

Consistent with the purpose of the earlier Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988, IDEA emphasizes the importance of assistive devices and services used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children and young adults with disabilities. The policies and procedures of Minnesota state agencies should include language that reflects the importance of assistive technology in helping young people to achieve personal goals for the transition from school to work and community living. It is essential to identify and engage primary public and private agencies in the development and application of assistive technology devices and to encourage their participation in individual transition planning meetings.

Ensure that Minnesota's community service agency policies are consistent with the intent and requirements of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992

In October 1992 President Bush signed into law the Rehabilitation Act Amendments. This followed two years of debate that centered on expanding earlier provisions of the Act to provide for full inclusion and integration into society of persons with disabilities through employment, independent living, and economic and social self-sufficiency. The amendments to Title I of the Act are of particular importance from a policy perspective as they relate to the provision of employment, transition, and family support services. Even though federal regulations pertaining to the Act's amendments are months from being finalized, several broad recommendations concerning the overall implications of this law on Minnesota's policies and procedures are offered.

19. Encourage collaboration in the development of state level plans, policies, and methods related to transition services and supports.

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 authorize the provision of "transition services" by adopting the definition contained within IDEA. The new amendments require that Attachment 10.6 (b)A of the state plan for vocational rehabilitation must describe the state unit's plans, policies, and methods to be followed to assist in the transition from education to employment and employment related activities, including a summary of the previous year's activities and accomplishments. This attachment must be updated annually. This provides vocational rehabilitation and special education professionals a unique opportunity to collaborate in the formulation of the state plan language concerning the nature of state level plans, policies, and methods to assist young adults in the transition from school to work and related employment activities. The Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training should actively encourage the participation of the Minnesota Department of Education and other state agencies in the development of state plan language concerning the provision of transition services. The Division of Rehabilitation Services should also explore the use of the establishment grant authority under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments to target resources to facilitate transition and related activities.

20. Promote coordination with other agencies through the development of interagency agreements.

The new amendments also strengthen language concerning interagency agreements and collaboration. Such agreements are now a requirement, which may be met by establishing interagency work groups and/or entering into formal interagency cooperative agreements that address policy, resources, and "all additional components necessary to ensure meaningful cooperation and coordination." Language concerning this coordination should be clearly stipulated within the vocational rehabilitation state plan and Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement. Although the determination of the specific agencies that should enter into cooperative interagency agreements with the state vocational rehabilitation is left to

state and local discretion, an inclusive approach that includes a broad array of state agencies is most consistent with the spirit of the law.

21. Promote discussion among state agencies regarding the nature and provision of personal assistance services.

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments authorize the provision of "personal assistance services" while individuals are receiving rehabilitation services. Under the act amendments, personal assistance services are defined as "a range of services provided by one or more persons, designed to assist an individual with a disability to perform daily living activities on or off the job that the individual would typically perform if the individual did not have a disability." Such services are intended to increase the individual's control in life and ability to perform everyday activities on or off the job. The implications of this definition of personal assistance services are far-reaching. The Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training, in collaboration with other state agencies, will need to clearly define the scope and nature of such services. It must be recognized that the provision of personal assistance services is also the responsibility and obligation of the Minnesota Department of Human Services and other state agencies serving individuals with disabilities. Active discussions must ensue among the state agencies responsible for delivering rehabilitation, special education, and varied human service programs to clearly delineate responsibilities for the provision of personal assistance and related individual and family support services.

22. Develop policies and procedures to address the new eligibility criteria.

As defined in the act amendments, "An eligible individual (i) has a physical or mental impairment which, for the individual, constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and (ii) can benefit in terms of employment outcome." Under the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992, states are directed to presume the applicant capable of benefiting from vocational rehabilitation services, unless the state agency can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the individual cannot benefit. This broadens the definition of service eligibility from earlier legislation. In establishing eligibility, use of appropriate existing data and information provided by other agencies, as well as individuals and their families, is required. Further, disability determinations by educational agencies will be considered in vocational rehabilitation's eligibility determination process. Eligibility decisions must now be made within 60 days of application, unless "exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the agency, or the need to conduct an extended evaluation, to determine the severity of the disability, or needed services, prevent such a decision." The new eligibility determination requirements will require that the Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training develop policies and procedures in concert with other state agencies to ensure appropriate use and sharing of assessment information, using prior disability determinations in establishing vocational

rehabilitation service eligibility, and in ensuring that rehabilitation services are extended to all individuals meeting the new eligibility criteria.

23. Maximize cost sharing and resource pooling opportunities among state and local agencies to enhance employment outcomes.

Employment outcome has been expanded to mean "entering or retaining full-time, or, if appropriate, part-time competitive employment in the integrated labor market (including satisfying the vocational outcome of supported employment) or satisfying any other vocational outcome the Secretary may determine." The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 further require that Minnesota assure that it is using Title VI-C supported employment funds as a supplement to Title I Federal-State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program. Services now available under Title I, as amended, include personal assistance services, transition services, and supported employment services. The Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training should evaluate the fiscal as well as programmatic implications of this change in the law. Interagency collaboration in the form of resource pooling and cost sharing must be viewed as a means for improving not only the availability of these services, but also a method for achieving cost-effective service delivery. Funding formulas that fully maximize local, state, and federal allocations and reimbursements must be developed, based on cooperative interagency approaches. The Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement must emphasize the importance of developing cost-effective strategies in the provision of transition and employment services for young adults and adults with disabilities.

24. Amend the current IWRP to reflect new consumer choice and participation provisions.

There are several changes to the Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP) to ensure consumer choice and participation in the development of the plan. The IWRP must now include "a statement by the individual in the words of the individual (or, if appropriate, in the words of a parent, a family member, a guardian, an advocate, or an authorized representative of the individual), describing how the individual was informed about and involved in choosing among alternative goals, objectives, services, entities providing such services, and methods used to provide or procure such services." The Minnesota Division of Rehabilitation Services should amend the current IWRP to include this new provision and establish procedures for monitoring its implementation.

25. Promote the involvement of Centers for Independent Living.

The new amendments continue to emphasize the importance of independent living services in assisting individuals in achieving full inclusion and integration in society, employment, and economic and social self-sufficiency. The Minnesota Division of Rehabilitation Services should continue to encourage the active participation of professionals and consumers

representing Minnesota's Centers for Independent Living on Community Transition Interagency Committees and in the development of individual transition plans for young adults with disabilities. Their participation should help to promote increased levels of community living independence as well as to promote the development of self-advocacy and self-empowerment skills among young adults with disabilities and families.

Expand vocational education opportunities for young adults with disabilities

For over two decades, federal legislation has been enacted to expand vocational opportunities to young adults and adults with disabilities. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational/Applied Technology Education Act of 1990, as enacted by Congress, is intended to afford young people with disabilities access to a wide range of career development programs, including vocational assessment, career exploration, work study, and vocational training. Concerted efforts must be made to ensure that young adults with disabilities have full access to these programs and services, and that vocational education personnel are actively involved in transition planning meetings statewide. The following recommendations stress the importance of vocational education in assisting young adults with disabilities as they make the transition from school to work, post-secondary education, and training.

26. Ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to vocational and educational programs and services.

People with disabilities must be ensured equal access to a full array of vocational education programs and services throughout Minnesota. The Carl D. Perkins Act of 1990 specifically requires that "individuals who are members of special populations will be provided equal access to the full range of vocational education programs available to individuals who are not members of special populations including occupationally-specific courses of study, cooperative education, apprenticeship programs, and, to the extent practicable, comprehensive career guidance and counseling services." The Minnesota State Plan for Vocational Technical Education must emphasize the essential role of local high schools and alternative education programs, LEAs, and cooperatives in assisting young adults with disabilities in the preparation for transition.

27. Encourage participation of vocational education personnel in planning transition services.

Vocational education personnel must be encouraged to participate in the development of transition goals and objectives for students with disabilities at grade nine or age 14. The Minnesota Department of Education should emphasize the importance of this participation to local vocational education directors. Vocational education personnel should facilitate the exchange of information on the availability of local vocational education programs and services, assist in determining specialized program adaptations and accommodations, and assist in developing a plan of specific

courses of study and programs in which young adults with disabilities will participate during their secondary education programs.

28. Promote the coordination of vocational education programs with other school and community services.

The Carl D. Perkins Act contains specific language concerning the coordination of vocational education programs with other school and community service agencies. Specifically, the Act Amendments of 1990 state that "vocational education planning for individuals with disabilities will be coordinated between appropriate representatives of vocational education, special education, and state vocational rehabilitation agencies." The Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement should contain language delineating procedures that promote collaboration and coordination of vocational education services at the local level. Further, the Minnesota State Plan for Vocational Technical Education must contain procedures for monitoring the coordination of services in the development of student IEPs, sharing of information on the availability of vocational education programs no later than the beginning of the ninth grade, and assisting students in order to fulfill the transition service requirements of IDEA.

29. Promote the support of students with disabilities in post-secondary education and training.

Minnesota hosts one of the most comprehensive systems of post-secondary education and training in the United States. This system encompasses a range of public and private colleges and universities, community colleges, technical colleges, and private technical training institutions. Assisting young adults with disabilities in accessing these post-secondary education and training programs must become a priority. These young people should be assisted in making needed connections to post-secondary education programs while still in school by participating in Minnesota's Post-secondary Enrollment Options Program and Tech-Prep programs. Minnesota's post-secondary education and training programs should also develop responsive policies for recruiting and enrolling young adults with disabilities in meaningful programs of study. This will require extensive collaboration among secondary and post-secondary education programs to achieve this goal. Further, each post-secondary institution at the community level must assume responsibility for communicating the full range of support services and reasonable accommodations they make available for individuals with disabilities. This information should be actively shared among young adults with disabilities, family members, and school and community service professionals.

Ensure that a high priority is placed on preparing and supporting professionals to work with young adults with disabilities and families during transition

Laws, regulations, and mandates alone do not provide services and support to young adults with disabilities — people do. The most comprehensive transition policies will not materially benefit the lives of young people with disabilities unless professionals possess the skills and expertise necessary to bring about needed improvements in programs and services statewide.

30. Establish standards for manageable levels of responsibility for professionals working in transition programs and services.

The importance of assuring that professionals are assigned reasonable levels of responsibility cannot be emphasized enough. Guidelines and factors that affect the workloads of professionals must be reviewed and reasonable expectations established. For example, determining realistic parameters for caseload sizes, geographic areas that professionals serve, and annual performance objectives is necessary to ensure that professionals have job responsibilities that can be fulfilled. Many young adults with disabilities will continue to fall through the cracks of the service delivery system unless the scope of professional responsibilities becomes manageable. Minnesota state agencies are encouraged to review the current responsibility levels of professionals and establish effective guidelines.

31. Emphasize transition in professional preservice training programs.

Professional development programs at the preservice level must prepare individuals from a variety of disciplines to assume roles in designing and delivering transition programs and services. In Minnesota's institutions of higher education, preservice training programs in the disciplines of special education, vocational education, rehabilitation, and social work must include coursework addressing the transition needs of young people with disabilities. Further, future professionals from all disciplines would benefit from training in multidisciplinary and interagency teaming strategies. The Minnesota Department of Education should establish a joint task force with institutions of higher education and other professional groups to make recommendations on ways to expand the emphasis on transition in preservice training programs.

32. Promote cross-training of educational and community service professionals.

Training of professionals who work in different agencies alongside one another should be undertaken whenever possible. When professionals from different agencies are trained together, positive working relationships form naturally. This also helps to establish a "common ground" of understanding among professionals concerning the inter-relationships of their roles in assisting young adults with disabilities at the time of transition

from school. The Minnesota State Transition Interagency Committee is encouraged to consider the development of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary training programs for professionals through ongoing state agency staff development efforts.

33. Provide training opportunities for paraprofessionals and direct service staff.

Even though paraprofessionals and direct service staff often have the most contact with individuals with disabilities, preservice and inservice training programs for these staff members are often nonexistent. Transition services cannot improve unless those who work directly with the young adults are well trained and skilled. It is of critical importance that Minnesota's technical college and community college systems establish training programs to prepare individuals to work in transition. The state must establish incentives to encourage post-secondary institutions to design and conduct these training programs on a continuous basis. Incentives must also be created that encourage paraprofessionals and direct service staff to actively participate in these training programs.

34. Recruit underrepresented groups for positions in transition.

People of color and persons with disabilities are underrepresented in transition positions statewide. Incentives are needed to encourage members of racial/ethnic minority groups and persons with disabilities to pursue careers in special education, rehabilitation, and other transition related fields. A key strategy for promoting diversity in transition positions involves developing meaningful incentives for members of underrepresented groups to participate in professional and paraprofessional training programs. The Minnesota Legislature, in cooperation with state agencies and institutions of higher education, should develop incentives to encourage underrepresented groups to pursue careers in transition areas.

35. Make technical assistance and consultation available to professionals to promote "best practices" in the delivery of transition programs and services statewide.

Technical assistance, consultation, and training must be available to all professionals in Minnesota. The feasibility of identifying or developing local expertise throughout Minnesota in order to establish local, regional, and statewide technical assistance networks should be explored. Professionals should also be kept abreast of best practices on transition through the active and continuous dissemination of timely and relevant information. Newsletters, resource guides, and local and regional workshops provide meaningful avenues for the sharing of this information.

4 *Minnesota Transition Policy* Community Level Recommendations

The importance of collaboration among individuals and groups to address local needs was emphasized throughout the document reviews and interviews. The policy recommendations in this section focus on these areas: Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) as vehicles for systems change at the community level, the importance of basing local decisions on reliable information, and the creation of inclusive communities.

Promote Community Transition Interagency Committees as the primary vehicles for systems change in Minnesota

In 1987, the Minnesota State Legislature enacted M.S. 120.17, which called for the creation of Community Transition Interagency Committees statewide. The intent of this legislation is to "stimulate communication and coordination between agency services within each local community to plan for the transition of young adults with disabilities from special education services to secondary vocational education services to post-secondary education, training, employment, and community living." Today, over 70 Community Transition Interagency Committees, involving over 1,000 professionals, family members, and employers, have formed throughout Minnesota. Over the past several years, community-level interagency collaboration has become viewed as the primary vehicle for creating system changes and improvements in transition programs and services in Minnesota. Supporting policies and procedures must continue to evolve to promote the active engagement of community members in these interagency efforts.

1. Expand the participation and role of individuals with disabilities and families on Community Transition Interagency Committees.

It is essential to secure the active involvement and participation of individuals with disabilities and family members in facilitating interagency collaboration at the community level. The needs and interests of individuals with disabilities and their families must be directly communicated and serve as the primary basis on which school and community service agency programs and services are developed and improved. These individuals, however, must become empowered to fully support and participate in these community-level interagency teams. One aspect of empowering individuals with disabilities and families is to clearly define their roles and provide opportunities for them to share information concerning their needs for school and postschool services and support. CTICs must continue to provide convenient avenues for their participation in interagency decision-making.

2. **Define the interagency role of professionals on CTICs.**

It is recognized that CTICs vary across Minnesota in terms of size, geographic area served, and memberships. In Minnesota's rural communities, professionals and community members are often called upon to serve in multiple and varied roles, which may mean extensive involvement on several interagency committees and school transition planning teams. CTICs are encouraged to invest the time to define the roles of professionals and other community members. This is necessary to ensure an equitable distribution of responsibility on interagency planning teams.

3. **Promote the participation of employers and other community members on CTICs.**

Employers and other community members must be encouraged to actively participate on community-level interagency planning teams. CTICs should work closely with local Chambers of Commerce, business associations, Private Industry Councils, as well as labor organizations in promoting their involvement and participation. This also includes encouraging the participation of civic groups, social and recreational agencies, city government, and other groups and organizations at the community level. CTIC membership should reflect the diversity of interests and resources available within communities to ensure individuals with disabilities and families access to the full range of community opportunities afforded to all citizens.

4. **Develop effective local methods for cost-sharing transition programs and services.**

Even though state agencies must carefully examine methods for pooling resources and cost-sharing transition programs and services, some of the more creative strategies for cost-sharing programs exist at the community level. Many examples of this type of community-level collaboration already exist throughout Minnesota. CTICs are encouraged to continue to explore the full range of options available to promote the sharing of resources and co-funding of programs, services, and individual and family supports necessary to make available a full array of services within communities statewide.

5. **Identify procedures for sharing information on community services and resources with professionals, individuals with disabilities, and family members.**

CTICs are encouraged to prepare community resource guides and directories of services that describe the school and community services available in their communities. This information should be actively shared with individuals with disabilities, family members, school and community service agency professionals, employers, and community members at large. Multiple avenues for sharing information should also be developed. These include conveying information to individuals with disabilities and

families during IEP meetings, evening and weekend workshops, and via mail and/or community resource fairs or conferences.

6. **Provide incentives that encourage the improvement of transition programs and services at the community level.**

Minnesota communities have made a significant commitment to achieving improvements in transition programs and services through interagency collaboration. The State Transition Interagency Committee and its representative agencies and organizations must continue to support and facilitate these activities by making available meaningful incentives. Gradually phased-in funding, special incentive funding to reward local interagency activities, and demonstration grant funds targeted to the development of collaborative interagency transition programs are important considerations. The Minnesota State Legislature, in collaboration with Minnesota state agencies, should consider these fiscal strategies as well as other incentives to promote interagency collaboration at the community level.

Create inclusive communities for individuals with disabilities

An inclusive community is one that provides individuals with disabilities the same opportunities as other citizens. To achieve this goal, all interests, both public and private, must make concerted efforts to make communities accessible, responsive, and open to individuals with disabilities and their families. This will require a process of active engagement by enlisting professionals, employers, civic and social organizations, neighbors, and friends to support the goals of inclusion and community integration for persons with disabilities in communities throughout Minnesota.

7. **Give young adults choices concerning where, how, and with whom they will live in their communities.**

Being a part of a community means living in that community. As transition plans are developed with young adults with disabilities, decisions regarding their future living arrangements must reflect their choices and preferences concerning where, how, and with whom they will live. The goal must be that of making available "typical" and accessible housing with special support based on the individual's needs and preferences. New housing options and an array of home support services for all will need to be developed. The Minnesota Department of Human Services must re-examine current federal and state funding streams to ensure that new housing alternatives and home support options are created. State agencies and local Community Transition Interagency Committees should stress the importance of individual choices and preferences regarding future living arrangements in transition planning meetings.

8. **Promote "natural supports" options in achieving meaningful life styles for young adults with disabilities.**

Family members, friends, neighbors, and co-workers are examples of natural supports for all individuals, including persons with disabilities. It is with these community members that persons with disabilities naturally interact as they live, work, and recreate in their communities. Transition services and supports developed at the local level should emphasize the use of natural supports to achieve integrated postschool employment and community living goals.

9. **Assure all citizens with disabilities opportunities for meaningful work in accessible and integrated employment settings.**

The importance of making available real jobs with equitable pay for individuals with disabilities has been at the forefront of disability policy in Minnesota and throughout the nation during the past decade. To sustain this momentum, there must be continued recognition that many individuals require a variety of ongoing support services to maintain employment. Persons with severe disabilities, for example, typically require long-term support to maintain paid employment in the community. The long-term support afforded to these individuals is currently insufficient to fully address their needs. The Minnesota Division of Rehabilitation Services and Minnesota Department of Human Services are encouraged to develop equitable and cost-effective strategies for making available long-term employment support services for these individuals. Specific strategies and recommendations concerning how best to make these long-term support services available have been addressed by the Minnesota Supported Employment Project managed through the Minnesota Division of Rehabilitation Services. These strategies and recommendations should be reviewed and fully implemented.

10. **Assist young adults with disabilities in accessing a full range of community services and programs.**

Full inclusion in communities means that individuals with disabilities participate in the same schools, places of employment, social and recreational programs, housing options, transportation services, and other community events and activities which those persons without disabilities normally access and routinely use. These are referred to as "generic" programs and services. Historically, it has been presumed that individuals with disabilities require highly specialized programs and services. This past practice has resulted in the evolution of many segregated programs and services. Increased emphasis must be placed on the full use of community programs and services. Careful planning is required to assist individuals with disabilities to access programs and services that others in the community enjoy. Architectural and physical barriers must be removed, reasonable accommodations made, and adequate support services created.

11. Ensure that individuals with disabilities and families are provided quality case management services.

More individuals with disabilities and their families require lifelong case management assistance from a professional who is responsible for coordinating an array of community services and supports. The need for case management services is typically intensified as young adults with disabilities exit the security of their educational programs. The absence of case management services during this critical period of transition too often results in individuals receiving no services upon departure from school. There currently is no centralized or stable form of case management on which individuals with disabilities and families can rely. The State Transition Interagency Committee is strongly encouraged to identify the agencies and individuals responsible for delivery of case management services. Interagency planning and cooperation must be used as the means by which improvements in these services are achieved.

12. Include multicultural perspectives in the planning and delivery of transition services.

Full inclusion means embracing multicultural perspectives in the planning and delivery of transition programs and services. The meaningful representation of persons of color on state and local interagency teams, advocacy programs, and in the direct delivery of services in our schools and community service agencies is imperative.

13. Promote the development of meaningful social and recreational opportunities for young adults with disabilities at the community level.

Young people with disabilities need options and opportunities to participate in community social events and recreational activities. Community Transition Interagency Committees need to involve representatives from local park and recreation centers, community education, civic groups, and social organizations in planning and implementing recreation/leisure supports and services. Access to generic activities and events must be a high priority. Involvement in community social and recreational activities should always be based on each individual's choices and preferences for participation.

Gather information that can be used in planning and improving community-level transition programs and services

An adequate foundation of information on the characteristics and needs of young adults with disabilities is essential to making sound decisions regarding transition programs and services. Currently, there is no such base of information, and decision makers lack a valid means to measure progress and prioritize future goals. A core base of information must be systematically collected by local individuals on a statewide basis. Such information will greatly enhance the capacities of individuals at all levels to make judgments that truly afford young adults with disabilities transition services and supports responsive to their needs. An adequate foundation of information on the characteristics and needs of young adults with disabilities is essential to making sound decisions regarding how to proceed with improvements in transition programs and services.

14. Collect information on student characteristics and needs for adult services through local needs assessment.

Formal systems for anticipating the postschool needs of students with disabilities are currently at an early stage of development. The Minnesota Department of Education, in concert with other state and local agencies, should promote the development of policies and procedures for gathering and organizing information on the needs of students for community services prior to their leaving school. This information will be of great value to agencies and organizations at the state and community levels that are engaged in planning activities.

15. Establish and maintain a system for gathering follow-along and postschool follow-up information on young adults with disabilities at the community level.

The gathering of information on the school experiences and postschool outcomes of young adults with disabilities provides a useful and important basis for making decisions regarding needed improvements in transition programs and services. Local schools and community service agencies who know these young people and their families are in the best position to collect and use this information. Such information, however, should be aggregated and shared at the state level to influence the development of supportive policies and administrative practices among state agencies. The Minnesota Department of Education, in collaboration with the State Transition Interagency Committee, is encouraged to support the development of an ongoing system for gathering follow-along and postschool follow-up information on young adults with disabilities. This would involve establishing policies and procedures for implementing the already-developed Minnesota Postschool Follow-up System and creating incentives that support the collection of information at the local level through LEAs, special education cooperatives, and/or Community Transition Interagency Committees. Additionally, a plan should be developed for aggregating information gathered at the community level to share among state agencies and the Minnesota Legislature.

16. **Encourage CTICs to follow regional and local economic and employment trends in planning and delivering services.**

Minnesota's economic and employment outlook varies significantly across regions of the state. Community Transition Interagency Committees are encouraged to work closely with local employers, Private Industry Councils, and job service offices in evaluating local job opportunities for young adults with disabilities. Such information should be routinely requested and used by schools and community service agencies in assisting young adults with disabilities as they make the transition from school to post-secondary education, training, and employment.

17. **Provide opportunities for community members to communicate perspectives on needed improvements in local transition services.**

All community members must have opportunities to contribute perspectives and insights on the types of changes and improvements needed in the provision of transition programs and services statewide. Community Transition Interagency Committees should provide local citizens with this opportunity. Public forums, town meetings, opinion surveys, and a variety of other strategies should be considered to engage community members in active discussions regarding school and community services for young adults with disabilities.

5 Minnesota Transition Policy Individual/Family Recommendations

The ultimate test of the effectiveness of transition policy is the positive impact it has on individuals with disabilities and families. The recommendations for transition policy at the individual and family level focus on the need to empower individuals and family members improve the quality and effectiveness of social and community services statewide.

Support and encourage the participation of young adults with disabilities and family members in efforts to improve the quality of the transition planning process

Effective transition planning requires the involvement of educators, adult agency representatives, and most importantly, young adults with disabilities and their families. It is critical that students and family members perceive that their participation is valued by professionals. Professionals demonstrate support by: (1) focusing transition planning on the needs and interests of young adults, as opposed to developing plans around what the service delivery system has traditionally offered; (2) empowering young adults and families to make their own decisions; and (3) providing information about community supports and services that young adults with disabilities can access.

1. **Base transition IEP goals and objectives on the assessed needs, preferences, and individual choices of students.**

   Transition IEP goals are meaningful only in so far as the needs, preferences, and choices of the young adult drive the planning and service delivery process. Assessment information must be collected regarding individual strengths, abilities, support needs, and interests in order to generate student-centered transition plans. Students and their families are a key source for the assessment information.

2. **Emphasize early planning for transition.**

   Transition planning efforts that are delayed until the final year or two of high school often result in poorly conceived and poorly coordinated plans. Early transition planning enables meaningful learning experiences to be arranged during high school and allows sufficient time for adult agencies to coordinate their roles and service responsibilities.

3. **Include all relevant community service agency representatives in each student's transition planning process.**

   Transition planning activities must include all service providers and agency representatives who are either currently involved with a student, or will be involved in the future. It is impossible to make plans and generate future goals for students without the participation of adult agencies. Furthermore, for community service agencies to be sufficiently prepared to

meet a young adult's service and support needs after high school, they must become familiar with the individual prior to his or her high school departure. School personnel must take responsibility for initiating transition planning activities and inviting all relevant community agencies into the process.

4. **Develop an exit plan for each student that identifies his or her needs for postschool services and support.**

   A school to adult life exit plan should be finalized during a student's last year of high school. Projected postschool outcomes, goals, and community service agency responsibilities should be explicitly delineated in this plan. All young adults should depart from school with an "exit folder" that contains critical information, such as the names, addresses, and phone numbers of postschool agencies and support personnel; a resume that details job experiences and references; and additional information that will help an individual take full advantage of future opportunities or access needed supports and services.

Ensure that young adults with disabilities develop the skills for employment, community living, and lifelong learning

Skills for employment, community living, and lifelong learning must be developed during the high school years. Minnesota's educational policies and programs reflect a strong commitment to producing a statewide educational system that promotes lifelong learning and success for all students. Ensuring that Minnesota's public schools effectively prepare young adults with disabilities for the challenges and demands of adult life must be a high priority.

5. **Promote a comprehensive and inclusive system of outcome-based education for all Minnesota students.**

   Minnesota's outcome-based education (OBE) policy presumes that all students can learn and succeed. OBE prescribes content in terms of what students need to know, rather than relying on predetermined course syllabi that prescribe what is to be taught. Learning is individualized, with the goal of preparing students to leave the educational system able to apply what they have learned to everyday family, work, and community situations. As outcome-based education evolves in school districts throughout Minnesota, special education professionals are encouraged to participate in local planning groups and committees to ensure that a comprehensive and inclusive system of outcome-based education is developed. Outcome-based education provides an excellent means for special education and general education professionals to collectively establish a "common ground" for addressing the educational needs of all Minnesota students. It is critical that those who are concerned about the transition of young adults with disabilities from school to adult life seize this unique opportunity to promote the goal of full inclusion in the educational system.

6. **Encourage students with disabilities to remain in school and assist those who have dropped out to complete their high school education.**

Nationally, 36% of all secondary students with IEPs drop out of school. This is a disproportionately high rate when compared with other students in the general education system. The range of high school and alternative education programs must be expanded to provide meaningful options for young adults with disabilities. Minnesota's Area Learning Centers and alternative education programs are currently two of the most important alternatives for secondary students who are at risk of dropping out. These programs offer flexible schedules, smaller class sizes, more individual attention, and specialized counseling and support services. Unfortunately, few students with disabilities participate in these programs. The Minnesota Department of Education and the state's Area Learning Centers and alternative education programs are strongly encouraged to consider the appropriateness of these programs for young adults with disabilities to reduce the exceptionally high dropout rate among these students.

7. **Determine the relationship between Minnesota's current IEP emphasis on transition and the new statewide graduation requirements.**

Minnesota's statewide graduation requirements focus on outcomes learned by students, rather than on high school course requirements. The outcome standards developed to date are relevant for all students and should be fully addressed during transition planning meetings. Transition goals and objectives required on IEPs for students beginning in grade nine or at age 14 should address the outcomes contained within Minnesota's high school graduation requirements. The Minnesota Department of Education must review its current IEP requirements on transition to incorporate the outcomes and standards contained within Minnesota's high school graduation policy.

8. **Expand opportunities for community learning.**

Learning in the community helps students to apply skills developed in classrooms to everyday contexts and situations. It is in the community that students learn employability skills, mobility skills, and social skills. Schools are encouraged to expand community learning opportunities for young adults with disabilities to develop essential skills for adulthood.

9. **Develop varied and flexible interdisciplinary instructional approaches that allow for individualization in the high school curricula.**

Team teaching, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and mentoring programs are all viable options for promoting education that is truly responsive to individual needs. Each of these approaches emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary planning, provides opportunities for teachers to

work in teams to address student needs, allows for flexible instructional grouping, and, most importantly, provides the opportunity to shape a curriculum that is sufficiently flexible to address the unique learning needs of all students. It is recommended that local schools adopt these strategies as a means of improving educational outcomes among young adults with disabilities.

10. Include young adults with disabilities in community service and young adult development programs while in high school.

Most high schools in Minnesota extend opportunities for students to earn credit while participating in community and neighborhood service activities. Community service and young adult development programs help students develop a sense of responsible citizenship in service to others. Further, students learn valuable employability skills in these programs, such as working with others effectively, following directions, and accepting responsibilities. Schools are encouraged to develop and expand these programs and to offer students with disabilities opportunities for participation.

11. Familiarize young adults with disabilities and their family members with Minnesota's extensive range of postschool, lifelong learning options.

Secondary education programs must place a high priority on emphasizing the importance of lifelong learning among all students. The importance of postsecondary education and training for young adults with disabilities cannot be emphasized enough. Accessing postsecondary education programs has been problematic for young adults with disabilities and participation rates remain low. Minnesota's current system of postsecondary education includes technical colleges, community colleges, community education, adult basic education and literacy programs, four-year institutions of higher education, diploma eligibility for those age 21 and over, and a range of private trade and business schools. These programs must improve current recruitment, enrollment, and placement practices to ensure equity in the participation rates of young adults with disabilities. Further, increased attention must be given to the types of support and reasonable accommodations made available to young adults with disabilities to ensure that they successfully complete their programs of study and training, and successfully enter employment.

Empower young adults with disabilities and families to successfully manage the transition from school to work and community living

When young adults with disabilities and families are active participants in transition planning, they develop a sense of ownership, and there is a great likelihood that transition initiatives will be successful. Professionals must focus their efforts on assisting young adults and families in developing competencies necessary for managing transition activities. Empowering young adults and families enables true collaboration to occur and maximizes the knowledge, skills, and resources of the transition team.

12. Include self-advocacy training as part of the high school curriculum for students with disabilities.

Self-advocacy training is needed to enable young adults to acquire skills to fully participate in the transition planning process. There are at least three benefits that result from effective self-advocacy training: (1) it ensures that the views and preferences of students are considered in the transition planning process; (2) it encourages young adults to develop decision-making skills; and (3) it encourages young adults to seek better services and opportunities. Although there are many ways by which self-advocacy training can be introduced into the secondary curriculum, it is incumbent on schools to make this training available.

13. Extend options to individuals with disabilities and families to independently purchase transition services and supports.

The current service delivery system places the control of resources in the hands of professionals. Professionals typically decide what a person with a disability needs and who will provide it. Young adults and their families need to have greater control over transition resources. Allowing individuals with disabilities the opportunity to purchase services and supports from community agencies is one means by which individual control can be enhanced. Although federal requirements limit the use of consumer-driven systems in many areas, state agencies should intensity their efforts to maximize the flexibility within the current system to meet consumer needs. The use of waivers to support persons with disabilities in community settings is an example of a flexible support program that promotes greater personal choice and empowerment in comparison to traditional funding modes.

14. Make available comprehensive programs and services that promote the academic as well as social, emotional, and physical development of young adults with disabilities.

It is important to recognize that many young people with disabilities experience family, social, and emotional difficulties that interfere with their learning and personal development. The problems of drug and alcohol abuse, delinquency, truancy, and emotional distress are as common among young people with disabilities as all other adolescents. Often, the complex and multiple problems these young people experience cannot

be fully addressed or resolved by the educational system alone. Collaboration among education, social, and health agencies is critically needed in addressing the full range of student needs. The Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Human Services, and the Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training must encourage schools and community service agencies to plan cooperatively to make available a full range of mental health, health, and social services to young adults with disabilities. Co-funding and co-locating services in accessible locations in communities should be supported.

6 Minnesota Transition Policy A Process for Change

As state and local agencies begin to address the specific recommendations identified in Parts III, IV, and V of this report, a structured process for planning and decision making must be implemented. Planning involves gathering and organizing information and developing the action steps necessary to reach specified goals. Steps in a planning process typically include:

1) Collection of information regarding obstacles to effective program delivery.
2) Development of strategies or action steps to overcome these obstacles.
3) Implementation of program improvement strategies.
4) Evaluation of the planning and program implementation process.

This section offers a general strategy that state and local agencies and groups may wish to consider in addressing the transition policy and program recommendations presented earlier. The framework for a general planning and implementation process is divided into two levels. Level A describes interagency *planning* steps and Level B outlines agency specific *implementation* steps.

Level A: Interagency Planning Steps

It is essential that all stakeholders are present when addressing issues related to policy changes that will affect transition services for individuals with disabilities and their families. Since the transition from school to adult life encompasses a broad range of agencies responsible for providing services and implementing rules and regulations, it is important that, along with individuals with disabilities and their families, representatives of these agencies become involved in the planning process. A transition interagency policy and improvement group must be established to carry out the tasks of: (1) determining which recommendations should be addressed first, and (2) identifying the primary agencies responsible and their role in addressing each prioritized recommendation. Level A lists the planning steps associated with the transition interagency policy and improvement group, and Level B lists the implementation steps suggested for the agency specific work groups.

Level B: Agency Specific Implementation Steps

Agencies identified by the transition interagency policy and program implementation group to address specific prioritized recommendations must convene work groups. These groups consist of agency personnel, consumers and their families, and others who will address the policy and program improvement implementation steps. A five-step implementation planning process is suggested for these work groups. The steps include: (1) convening the work groups, (2) identifying obstacles, (3) establishing goals and priorities, (4) developing action steps, and (5) implementing action steps and planning for evaluation. Each step in the implementation level is described below.

1. Convening Agency Specific Work Groups

Each agency must identify the key persons who can provide leadership and input into the development of action plans. These small working groups of eight to ten individuals who hold primary interest and responsibility for the outcome of the planning process should include individuals with disabilities, family members, interested community members, and professionals. It is important to consider the position and role of the individuals before including them on the work group. Persons who have influence in decision making should be included.

2. Identifying Obstacles

Sometimes, in the desire to improve services, planning groups move too quickly to suggest remedies before the problems are clearly identified and understood. The second step in the implementation level is to identify for each priority recommendation the specific obstacles that might influence the implementation of the recommendation. Obstacle identification is a unique type of needs assessment. It allows the group to focus on the identified priority recommendation and collect information related to implementation. It is through obstacle identification that potential solutions to problems can be generated. Using group process techniques, valuable information can be collected from individuals potentially affected by the changes, such as individuals with disabilities, family members, and professionals.

3. Establishing Goals and Priorities

After primary obstacles have been identified for each policy or program recommendation, the interagency work group must transform the obstacles into action goals. The group must often prioritize among several alternative actions for bringing about needed im-

provements since there is often more than one possible solution to a problem. Goals simply indicate a general direction to follow. The most important activity is the development of specific action steps to guide agencies in the program improvement process.

4. Developing Action Steps

An action step is the activity identified to meet a specific goal or objective. The more comprehensive and complete the action steps are, the more committed each participant in the planning process becomes to specific assignments. A management plan that describes the goals, action steps, person(s) or agency(ies) responsible, resources, success criteria, timeline, and evaluation questions will assist the group with monitoring its progress and evaluating the outcomes. A management plan might be similar to the one presented in table 2.

TABLE 2: MANAGEMENT PLAN	
Goal & Action Steps	List recommended goal. List action steps needed to reach goal
Timeline	List dates of completion for each action step.
Agency/Person Responsible	Identify agency or person responsible for activities
Resources	Identify required resources (i.e., funds, personnel, etc.)
Success Criteria	Describe intended outcome(s) and the criteria which indicate success
Evaluation Questions	Describe question(s) the group will answer to evaluate the outcome (i.e., Did it work? How well did it work? What improvements has it made? etc.)

5. Implementing Action Steps and Planning for Evaluation

After completing the previous steps, agency work groups should be able to implement the action steps and plan for evaluation. A work plan including action steps, persons or agencies responsible, outcome expectations, and a timeline that shows how action steps are related to one another should be developed. Showing how action steps taken by various agencies are interrelated is particularly important when addressing policy changes in the area of transition from school to adult life since a change in one agency's rules could have major implications on the effect of another agency's rules. As plans for implementation are developed, the group must consider

planning for evaluation. Evaluation provides the group with information about the outcomes of the group's efforts and the merit of the plans and activities employed. Evaluation typically answers the following questions:

1) Did the strategy work?
2) How well did it work?
3) What contributed to the success of the strategy?
4) Did things go as planned? Why or why not?
5) What changes could be made?

The evaluation should be related to stated priorities, goals, and objectives for which each of the following should be considered: (1) specification of goal, objective, and strategy; (2) development of timelines; (3) identification of data needs and sources; (4) identification of data analysis procedures; and (5) determination of criteria indicating success. Evaluation will help to determine the extent to which goals and objectives were met.

Conclusion

As state and local agencies begin to respond to the recommendations presented here, it is important that a structured planning and implementation process be used. The steps outlined in this report represent a general strategy common to groups involved in managing programs promoting change. Change can be challenging but is with change that improvements and services can be realized for individuals with disabilities and their families.

A Glance Back, A Look Ahead

Former Minnesota Senator and Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey once referred to individuals with disabilities as the "invisible minority." Through the progress of the past 40 years, young adults with disabilities are no longer "invisible." They have grown up in local neighborhoods, attended local schools, and established meaningful relationships with others in their communities. In many ways, young adults with disabilities have more opportunities today than ever before to embark upon meaningful futures.

Despite the many advancements, the work of supporting young adults with disabilities is far from finished. The recommendations presented in this report document the challenges that must be addressed in order to build a truly responsive system of transition services and supports. These recommendations are intended to stimulate discussion among policymakers, agency administrators, field professionals, person with disabilities, and all others in Minnesota who are concerned with transition policies and the programs and practices that emanate from them.

No one agency is responsible for implementing these recommendations. In order to bring about the changes that are necessary, collaboration and cooperation among all concerned parties must be achieved. Only systematic collaborative efforts at all levels (i.e., state, community, individual/family) of policy development and implementation will assure that young adults with disabilities in Minnesota are afforded opportunities to realize their full potential.

A Affiliation of State Transition Interagency Committee Members

The State Transition Interagency Committee (STIC) was established in 1984 to encourage collaboration among agencies to develop a system of transition services. It is comprised of the following state and local organizations:

- Consumer Advocacy Organizations
- Minnesota Community Colleges
- Minnesota Department of Education
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training
- Minnesota Disability Law Center
- Minnesota State Council on Disability
- Minnesota State Planning Agency
- Minnesota State University System
- Parent Advocacy Organizations
- State Board of Vocational and Technical Education
- State Services for the Blind
- University of Minnesota

B Source Documents and Reports

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C Acronyms

ABE = Adult Basic Education
AVA = American Vocational Association
CE = Career Education or Community Education
CIL = Center for Independent Living
CRC = Certified Rehabilitation Counselor
CSSA = Community Social Services Act
CTIC = Community Transition Interagency Committee
DAC = Developmental Achievement Center or Day Activity Center
DD = Developmental Disabilities
DHS = Department of Human Services
DJT = Department of Jobs and Training
DOL = Department of Labor
DRS = Division of Rehabilitation Services (Department of Jobs and Training)
ECSU = Education Cooperative Service Units
ICF/MR = Intermediate Care Facility for Mentally Retarded
ICI = Institute on Community Integration (at the University of Minnesota)
IDEA = Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP = Individual Education Plan
IHE = Institution of Higher Education
ISP = Individual Service Plan
IWRP = Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan
JTPA = Job Training Partnership Act
LEA = Local Education Agency
MA = Medical Assistance
PACER = Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights
PASS = Plan for Achieving Self Support
PIC = Private Industry Council (of Job Training Partnership Act)
P.L. = Public Law
QMRP = Qualified Mental Retardation Professional
QRC = Qualified Rehabilitation Counselor
REI = Regular Education Initiative
SDE = State Department of Education
SEA = State Education Agency
SILS = Semi-Independent Living Services
SLA = Supported (or Supervised) Living Arrangements
SSA = Social Security Administration
SSB = State Services for the Blind and Visually Handicapped
SSDI = Social Security Disability Insurance
SSI = Supplemental Security Income
STIC = State Transition Interagency Committee
SVE = Secondary Vocational Education
UAP = University Affiliated Program
VR = Vocational Rehabilitation

D State Level Recommendations *Summary*

Update the Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement

1. Re-examine the roles and responsibilities of state agencies in the delivery of transition services and supports.
2. Involve young adults with disabilities and their families in development of the Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement.
3. Support the actions of Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) in improving transition services.
4. Maximize cost sharing and resource pooling opportunities among agencies at the state and community levels.
5. Require that the Minnesota State Transition Interagency Agreement be reviewed and updated annually.

Encourage collaboration and the sharing of information among schools and community service agencies

6. Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of professionals in the transition process are clearly defined.
7. Assist young adults with disabilities and their families in accessing needed school and community services.
8. Encourage the sharing of information on young adults with disabilities among agencies on a need-to-know basis.
9. Promote joint planning among agencies in the development of individual plans for young adults with disabilities.
10. Encourage the co-location of services for young adults with disabilities and their families at the community level.
11. Identify and extend services to unserved and underserved groups.

Ensure that Minnesota's educational and transition policies are consistent with the intent and requirements of IDEA

12. Define "transition services" within Minnesota laws and regulations in accordance with IDEA.
13. Change policy and procedures to promote the inclusion and involvement of students in transition planning.
14. Change policy and procedures to promote the inclusion and involvement of family members in transition planning.
15. Encourage collaboration among agencies as they address transition services in IEPs.
16. Encourage state agencies to review and determine agency responsibility for transition services.
17. Determine the qualifications of personnel to provide rehabilitation counseling services as defined within IDEA.
18. Encourage state agencies to reflect the importance of assistive technology in their policies and procedures as well as through identification and involvement of public and private resources.

Ensure that Minnesota's community service agency policies are consistent with the intent and requirements of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992

19. Encourage collaboration in the development of state level plans, policies, and methods related to transition services and supports.
20. Promote coordination with other agencies through the development of interagency agreements.
21. Promote discussion among state agencies regarding the nature and provision of personal assistance services.
22. Develop policies and procedures to address the new eligibility criteria.
23. Maximize cost sharing and resource pooling opportunities among state and local agencies to enhance employment outcomes.
24. Amend current IWRP to reflect new consumer choice and participation provisions.
25. Promote the involvement of Centers for Independent Living.

Expand vocational education opportunities for young adults with disabilities

26. Ensure individuals with disabilities have equal access to vocational and educational programs and services.
27. Encourage participation of vocational education personnel in planning transition services.
28. Promote the coordination of vocational education programs with other school and community services.
29. Promote the support of students with disabilities in postsecondary education and training.

Ensure that a high priority is placed on preparing and supporting professionals to work with young adults with disabilities and families during transition

30. Establish standards for manageable levels of responsibility for professionals working in transition programs and services.
31. Emphasize transition in professional preservice training programs.
32. Promote cross-training of educational and community service professionals.
33. Provide training opportunities for paraprofessionals and direct service staff.
34. Recruit under-represented groups for positions in transition.
35. Make technical assistance and consultation available to professionals to promote "best practices" in the delivery of transition programs and services statewide.

E Community Level Recommendations *Summary*

Promote Community Transition Interagency Committees as the primary vehicles for systems change in Minnesota

1. Expand the participation and role of individuals with disabilities and families on Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs).
2. Define the interagency role of professionals on CTICs.
3. Promote the participation of employers and other community members on CTICs.
4. Develop effective local methods for cost-sharing transition programs and services.
5. Identify procedures for sharing information on community services and resources with professionals, individuals with disabilities, and family members.
6. Provide incentives that encourage the improvement of transition programs and services at the community level.

Create inclusive communities for individuals with disabilities

7. Give young adults choices concerning where, how, and with whom they will live in their communities.
8. Promote "natural supports" options in achieving meaningful life styles for young adults with disabilities.
9. Assure all citizens with disabilities opportunities for meaningful work in accessible and integrated employment settings.
10. Assist young adults with disabilities in accessing a full range of community services and programs.
11. Ensure that individuals with disabilities and families are provided quality case management services.
12. Include multicultural perspectives in the planning and delivery of transition services.
13. Promote the development of meaningful social and recreational opportunities for young adults with disabilities at the community level.

Gather information that can be used in planning and improving community-level transition programs and services

14. Collect information on student characteristics and needs for adult services through local needs assessment.
15. Establish and maintain a system for gathering follow-along and postschool follow-up information on young adults with disabilities at the community level.
16. Encourage CTICs to follow regional and local economic and employment trends in planning and delivering services.
17. Provide opportunities for community members to communicate perspectives on needed improvements in local transition services.

F Individual and Family Recommendations *Summary*

Support and encourage the participation of young adults with disabilities and family members in efforts to improve the quality of the transition planning process

1. Base transition IEP goals and objectives on the assessed needs, preferences, and individual choices of students.
2. Emphasize early planning for transition.
3. Include all relevant community service agency representatives in each student's transition planning process.
4. Develop an exit plan for each student that identifies his or her needs for postschool services and support.

Ensure that young adults with disabilities develop the skills for employment, community living, and lifelong learning

5. Promote a comprehensive and inclusive system of outcome-based education for all Minnesota students.
6. Encourage students with disabilities to remain in school and assist those who have dropped out to complete their high school education.
7. Determine the relationship between Minnesota's current IEP emphasis on transition and the new statewide graduation requirements.
8. Expand opportunities for community learning.
9. Develop varied and flexible interdisciplinary instructional approaches that allow for individualization in the high school curricula.
10. Include young adults with disabilities in community service and young adults development programs while in high school.
11. Familiarize young adults with disabilities and their family members with Minnesota's extensive range of postschool, lifelong learning options.

Empower young adults with disabilities and families to successfully manage the transition from school to work and community living

12. Include self-advocacy training as part of the high school curriculum for students with disabilities.
13. Extend options to individuals with disabilities and families to independently purchase transition services and supports.
14. Make available comprehensive programs and services that promote the academic as well as social, emotional, and physical development of young adults with disabilities.

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